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AN OPEN LETTER TO  
THE NATION  
WITH REGARD TO  
A PEACE PLAN

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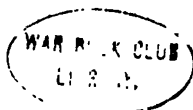
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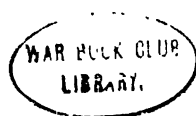


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12 FEB 1917







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**AN OPEN LETTER TO  
THE NATION  
WITH REGARD TO  
A PEACE PLAN**

**BY  
JAMES HOWARD KEHLER**

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*When crowds have come, as the result of  
\* \* \* changes of belief, to acquire a profound  
antipathy for the images evoked by certain  
words, the first duty of the true statesman is  
to change the words.—Gustave Le Bon.*

*The work of the consulate and the empire  
consisted more particularly in the clothing  
with new words of the greater part of the in-  
stitutions of the past—De Tocqueville.*



**AN OPEN LETTER TO THE NATION**



## FOREWORD

Herewith is presented a peace plan

Which is not politically controversial:

Which requires no international agreements, calls for no new tribunals or other machinery of operation and will involve no change in present governmental practices:

Which is not offered as a substitute for such proposed solutions of the war problem as arbitration, disarmament, etc., but as an aid toward the development of a public sentiment for such measures:

Which does not suggest the immediate abolition of war, an obvious impossibility until public sentiment shall demand its abolition, but which provides for the automatic *direction and acceleration of public thought* toward the ideal of peace instead of toward the ideal of war:

Which proposes to accomplish these ends by the utilization of known principles in psychology.



## **THE LETTER**

**TO THE PRESIDENT, THE MINISTERS OF  
GOVERNMENT, AND THE CONGRESS OF THE  
UNITED STATES: TO THE MEMBERS OF  
PEACE SOCIETIES: TO THE PRESS AND TO  
THE PEOPLE:**

## **GREETING**

I beg respectfully to suggest that the department of Government now known as the War Department hereafter be called the Peace Department; that its Ministers hereafter may be known as Secretaries of Peace; that what are known as War Policies hereafter may be known as Peace Policies.

It will be agreed, I think, that the new word expresses more accurately than the old the present functions, temper and intent of our Government in its international relations; that our War Department actually is a department for peace; that our army and

navy are, in intention, agencies for peace, and would become more effectively so if their calling ceased to be defined as that of war; that our War Secretary now is, in effect, a Minister of Peace, in that his primary office is not to make war, but to avert it, and the degree of his prestige is in direct ratio to his success in preserving the peace and tranquillity of our people; that our war budgets are, in fact, peace budgets, and should be called so, even in time of war, inasmuch as it scarcely will be denied that peace would be the primary object of any war in which we might engage.

Our war policies being already, in fact, peace policies, my proposal is simply that they be called such, that our terminology be revised to accord with our practices, our intentions and the ideals of the present day.

The tendency of modern thought is negative, if not hostile, toward war. It is positive toward peace. By substituting the concept Peace for the concept War in naming our Departments, our Ministers and our Policies, we shall, by taking advantage of

the known suggestibility of the human mind and of the present current of public thought, greatly accelerate that current in the direction of its tendency and in the furtherance of our hopes, our ideals and the admitted purposes of what now is called our War Department.

Inasmuch as the plan here presented is not politically controversial, as it includes no proposal for a change in the existing policies of our Government, or in the actual practice of any governmental department, it is respectfully suggested that those to whom it is addressed take such action as may lie within their power to bring it before the various legislative bodies of the United States for their consideration; and in every way to further its adoption if the plan shall be so fortunate as to receive their distinguished approval.

JAMES HOWARD KEHLER



**AN ARGUMENT FOR THE FOREGOING LETTER**



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## PEACE FOR WAR

**T**HERE is a law of the association of ideas by which men, and therefore institutions, tend to function according to the names or titles by which they are called, and according to the traditions which attach to those names or titles; a law by which there is both internal and external constraint upon men thus to function traditionally, rather than creatively.

The laws of mental action are so well known today that the frequently immeasurable importance of a word, and in particular the tremendous import of the names of things, are quite generally recognized.

Originally, it is to be supposed, names grew out of functions and were expressive of them; but inasmuch as the functions of institutions must change with the times if they are to continue to express the times, it follows that names must be changed if they are not to limit function by failing to express it.



There is no doubt that the original function of an army was war. Soldiers were expected to fight. An army not engaged in war represented discontent, a sheer waste of energy, great expense and a certain internal menace. It was natural and right that the department of government which handled the army should be called the War Department.

But the times have so changed that the chief duty of an army—in our country at least—is to keep the peace. Our soldiers are expected *not* to fight, except under conditions of extreme necessity. The men who control our armies are considered successful in the degree to which they avoid conflict.

Peace with honor is the ideal of the western world. The victories of peace are our victories. The *horrors* of war touch the American mind more quickly and deeply than the *honors* of war. No particular honor attached to peace in the ancient world. The battlefield was the field of honor and there were no great distinctions to be gained elsewhere.

## NEW WORDS FOR OLD

Since peace is our ideal and the avoidance of war our intention; since the primary office of our armies admittedly is the preservation of peace, why should we not call that department of government which has to do with our army the Peace Department?

Why not revise the name to fit the altered purpose? Why not thus gain for our ideal and our intention the enormous suggestive power which lies in a name, rather than to go on handicapping our ideal and our intention by the equal suggestive power which inheres in a name that denies our ideal and lies about our intention every time it is spoken or written?

War Department, indeed! Have we such a department, in reality? Has our government today such a department, in fact? Will our government today admit that any part of its purpose is to make war?

I speak not for myself alone, but for my country, I think, in saying that deliberate armed aggression upon other peoples as a

national ideal today is unthinkable and non-existent.

The European situation may be interpreted as indicating that there are still in the world monarchs or ministers who cherish a secret fondness for wars of aggression, but they are a relic of the past, they do not represent the spirit or the ideals even of their own peoples, and certainly not that new-world consciousness which has set the face of our people unalterably toward peace.

Our "war policies"—what are they but policies of peace—policies to avoid war at any cost save honor? Why then designate what actually is a Department for Peace by an anachronistic title which forces us to call its policies by a false and misleading name?

#### THE SLAVERY TO NAMES

A bureau of government called the War Department clearly is not functioning within the meaning of its name unless it is warring or planning war. There exists the psychological tendency in every man en-

gaged for an expressed purpose, to feel that he must seem to work toward that purpose in order to seem to be doing his duty. There is the same tendency on the part of other men, the public, to think that he should so work—a subconscious but very potent *expectancy* that he will so work.

Thus, under constraint, from the inside, of a name which tells him that his department is for war and that his business is war; and, from the outside, of a public expectancy created by the same psychological process, he is breasting the current of public thought and of his own nature. He can become no great warrior and is a negative agent for peace.

No army officer today, so far as I know, feels that he dares to be an open advocate of peace—that he dare join definitely in a peace movement. He feels constrained to talk, act and look war-like—for is he not in the service and pay of war?—in a department called the War Department, and under a cabinet minister called the Secretary of War? He must live up to the name of the thing he serves, in appearance at least.

Truly, language is mighty and will prevail. We are the slaves of the names of things.

Consider what it would mean to have our war secretaries, with our army and its officers, committed definitely, publicly and by name, to our national ideal of peace; to give them the benefit and stimulus of a public expectancy in accordance with the public ideal,—thus to utilize for our ideals instead of for our aversions that mental law which constrains men to express the name by which they are called.

The power of suggestion is too well known to require comment here. School-boys know that the public can be definitely and effectively psychologized for an idea by giving the idea a name and giving the name publicity. The army and the government of our country can be turned into constructive and positive, instead of negative agents for peace, if the nation will revise the name of one of its institutions to accord with the present functions of that institution.

## WAR AND THE AVERAGE MAN

There is widespread doubt, amongst average men, of the usefulness of the army. Average men still think, because of the name under which it operates, that the army is for war. The average man, because of the spirit of the times, wants peace, not war. He wonders sometimes why we keep up such an expensive establishment for a thing which seems to him rather useless, out-of-date and remote.

Most Americans now living never have seen a war. The thought of war is not constant and in the fore-front of the average man's consciousness. He does not quite see why he should pay anything for war, especially when there is no war and when peace is what he wants.

The average man does not analyze deeply. He does not see that what he really is paying for is peace, that his army and his War Department really are doing all they can, under the handicap of their name, for peace, and as little as possible for war. He is willing to pay for peace. Why not con-

vince him that peace is what he *is* paying for, by calling it by its right name?

I believe that every American today wants peace more than he wants war, but over against that fact must be placed the law of his nature which compels him also to want to get what he is paying for.

Man's intellect is better understood than his emotions. As long as he thinks that he is paying for war, even though intellectually he wants peace, instinctively he feels that he is being swindled when his government is not expending his money for war.

Let the same man see that he is paying for peace, by calling it peace, and in times of peace he will feel that he is getting what he pays for. If his country is plunged into war, his innate dissatisfaction will run against war, because he then will not be getting what he is paying for. His intellectual preference then will parallel his emotional prejudice and both will function naturally for peace. We shall have a whole man, the two sides of his nature harmonized and functioning solidly in one direction—a highly desirable result, surely.

Constant criticism is heard of our war budgets, only, I think, because they are *called* war budgets. Average men are quite likely to think that money spent on war equipment is wasted unless we have war. In times of peace we shall always hear criticism of every expenditure in the name of war. In the event of war, however, we should hear no complaint of any effort or expenditure in the name of peace.

It may easily be pointed out that average thinking is loose thinking. No doubt, but it is what we have to deal with and we cannot change the nature of it. But we can change the name of a thing to express its real nature. When we do that we shall have a department for peace, doing effectively and enthusiastically what it now does more or less furtively and more or less ineffectively; we shall call the policies of that department peace policies, we shall have peace budgets and peace appropriations and we shall have the united and enthusiastic support of a public which does its thinking, involuntarily and because of the spirit of the times, in terms of peace and

not of war. By the change of a word, we shall have adjusted our institutions to the thinking of the people and of the times instead of continuing foolishly and futilely to breast the current of advancing thought.

#### PATRIOTISM, OLD AND NEW

Patriotism once expressed itself in enthusiasm for war, but war was the chief business of the older states. Practically every man was a soldier. To support the state could mean nothing then unless it meant the support of war. We simply have modeled our terminology upon an ideal of civilization which never has existed in our country and which today is more foreign to our thinking than ever before.

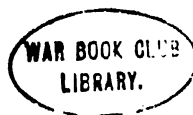
The enthusiasm of our people is for peace. We are able to see with especial clarity just now that the work of nations is hampered, not helped, by war. Our people are doing things which demand peace for their accomplishment. Our patriotism expresses itself in upholding the hands of those who are working to avert war.

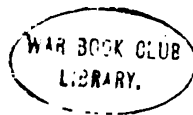
We have a wider patriotism also, which expresses itself in world-neighborliness—in a passion for justice rather than for strife. We will not enthuse over anachronistic, wornout symbols of greatness. Symbols are valid with us only as they express our present ideals.

But give us symbols of our present ideals and we will support the state with enthusiasm, because it expresses ourselves. There is in the United States no lack of patriotism for peace with honor, and that patriotism is the state's best assurance of patriotism for war, if peace with honor shall ever become impossible to our nation.

New York, April, 1914





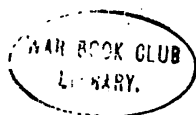


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